



Speech
Ambassador Lewis Lukens
Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Dakar (SupdeCo)
Dakar
May 31, 2013

(As prepared)

Students and faculty of SupdeCo,

It's an honor for me to be here at SupdeCo with all of you today. SupdeCo has been at the forefront of business education in Senegal for twenty years, and this institution has a fine reputation for forming the leaders of Senegal's business community. We appreciate the relationship we've had with SupdeCo, the various visiting American speakers you have hosted, and the students who have participated in the Social Entrepreneurship Internship Program over the years. SupdeCo students are among our best candidates for the Junior Staff Development Program, which offers participants the opportunity to attain a master's degree in the United States. We appreciate the fact that SupdeCo is one of only two locations in West Africa that offers the electronic TOEFL exam, a requirement for applicants to our exchange programs. This is a very important function, and we are grateful to SupdeCo for making this possible.

I'd like to talk today about the environment and about health, two pillars of our diplomatic and development efforts in Africa. In March, President Macky Sall and I cut the ribbon on our new embassy. We are located in Almadies, with a beautiful view of the ocean and many trees in the surrounding properties. Every day, I am amazed at this fabulous view. I must have one of the best views of all American Ambassadors throughout the world.

This new embassy was built according to very strict ecological standards and is surely the most environmentally and technologically advanced building in West Africa. The building uses 35% less water than buildings of similar size, and we generate up to 25% of our electricity directly from solar energy. We treat our own wastewater and recycle that water for our landscaping.

I decided this year that our Embassy would commemorate Independence Day in April, instead of on July 4, in recognition of Earth Week. My Embassy is doing everything possible to contribute to Senegal's environment in a positive way -- for example, in addition to the embassy's special features, we have a "Green Team" that meets to discuss environmental projects and to disseminate information about responsible ecological actions. Also during Earth Week, many Embassy personnel and I went out and picked up trash in the Almadies. Yes, I really picked up trash. I filled two large trash bags with paper and plastic coffee cups and candy wrappers, between expensive apartments, our embassy, and five star hotels in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods of West Africa.

I have now lived in Senegal for two years as Ambassador. During this time, I have come to love this country, the people, the beautiful vistas, and the *Taranga*. I also lived here in Dakar for three years as a small child. In my life I have traveled to over one hundred countries, and lived in 14 countries. Besides the US, I have lived longer in Senegal than anywhere. I have tremendous respect and friendship for Senegal and its people; that friendship is something that I cherish, and I will have a lifelong attachment to this country. So today I speak to you not only as President Obama's representative in Dakar, but as a partner and a friend.

In three weeks, Senegal will welcome President Obama to Dakar. As I drive and run around Dakar I wonder sometimes what his first impressions will be. He will see the hardworking people, the crashing waves of the Atlantic on the beaches of Ngor, and the proud baobab trees that signify Senegal and the Senegalese people. But he will also see trash by the side of the road. A lot of trash.

The trash I see every day is a great disappointment to me, because I can see how it is holding Senegal back. I think that if there's one thing that has been proven to me in all of the countries I have worked and lived in over the years, it is that environment and a country's branding go hand in hand. It is difficult to attract business and investment to a country that has challenges with trash collection, water and sewage treatment, and also unfinished buildings all around. Successful firms, and successful countries, understand the connection between environment and health. The piles of trash throughout this country dissuade investment because they are unattractive and also because they create serious health risks.

Therefore, I implore you -- the future leaders of Senegal's most major enterprises and business concerns -- to consider, as you are starting your careers, the importance of protecting and taking care of Mother Earth, including keeping her soil, water, and air clean. This is important for your nation's economy, as well as for the health of your children -- current and future -- and for their children. Senegal has so much potential. I would be thrilled to see it flourish all the more. And a cleaner, healthier, future starts now, with each and every one of you, and the choices that you make. It starts with that plastic coffee cup that you decide to throw in a proper trash receptacle. It starts with your involvement in local government to press for better services. And it extends all the way to your decisions on how and where to build a factory or manufacturing center.

The Obama Administration's comprehensive strategy on Sub-Saharan Africa is based on four pillars: first, to promote opportunity and development; second, to spur economic growth, trade, and investment; third, to advance peace and security; and fourth, to strengthen democratic institutions. Our partnership with Senegal embodies all four of those pillars. And I believe that an improvement in the management of Senegal's city planning and sanitation will make a huge impact on the progress you will make in achieving the goals of these four pillars.

Change has to come from within -- and who better to undertake that challenge than you, Senegal's future business leaders. As you progress in your careers, I urge you to take a leadership role in changing this country for the better. Not through international aid, but through actions by every Senegalese citizen. Cleaning up Senegal is not something that requires outside expertise or financing. It just requires the willingness and desire of the Senegalese people. You,

as young leaders, can create that willingness and desire. You can show your fellow citizens the way to a cleaner, healthier, more competitive, and more prosperous future.

Best wishes to each and every one of you. Thank you very much for having me here today. I would very much like to stay and make myself available to answer your questions on any topic. *Dieurejeuf, ba benène yone!* [Jer-RE jef, BA be-NEN yohn!]